

Increased class sizes in Balto. Co. high schools: A student's view

I wrote this letter [to the Baltimore Sun](#) on May 16, 2012.

I have attended Towson High School for four years, and the change in class size this year was a dramatic shift. Your recent article made clear how cutting 200 high school teachers in the Baltimore County School System has negatively affected students and teachers (“Baltimore County high schools see class sizes grow,” May 12).

Thirty-two percent of classes have more than 30 students this year, a 22 percent increase in one year. This will not only make it hard for students to get individualized attention, but the classes will also become more challenging for teachers.

Teachers already have to deal with preparing their students for all the standardized tests — such as the HSAs, the SATs and the PSATs — but now more students are entering their classes. A perfect example is my nutrition and foods class, which has more than 36 students.

We usually work in groups of six in the kitchens at the back of the classroom. Six people in each kitchen means that a few people do most of the work while everyone else stands around with nothing to do. This does not make for a good learning environment.

The same thing happened in my math class and my English class. Baltimore County Public Schools motto is “Focused on Quality; Committed to Excellence,” but the staff cuts mean these classes don’t live up to that promise.

Why is austerity making its way into the classroom? More than a year ago, more than 60 students rallied in front of the Old Courthouse in Towson to protest the proposal to cut teaching positions. The unelected and unaccountable school board and Superintendent [Joe Hairston](#) turned a deaf ear to our voices.

County Executive [Kevin Kamenetz](#), who promised in his 2010 campaign to improve education, approved the cuts. It was assumed that cuts to high-performing schools could be maintained because they are already high-performing, and that low-performing schools shouldn’t have cuts in teachers.

I have seen the cuts first-hand, and I know that cuts to the high-performing schools do cause those schools to perform less well. While I agree that low-performing schools should not have cuts in their number of teachers, neither should high-performing schools. I don’t know how we can wage war on the students of this county when the economy is in trouble.